

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction to Methodology**

Chapter three highlights the research methodology and procedures used in this thesis. Section 3.1 covers the methodology used in key translation terms discovery, while section 3.2 covers the methodology used to test key translation terms. Both parts consist of the following sections: research perspective and design, research questions and participants, unit of analysis, variables and instrument, data collection procedures as well as analysis and reliability of research results.

##### **3.1.1 Research Perspective**

The research perspective taken in this thesis is both descriptive and comparative. The research is evaluated based on work by Hill (2005) in which she made the case that indigenous terms for spiritual beings are superior to non-indigenous or artificial terms. This thesis is written from a relevance theory perspective. In this view, using local terms for spiritual beings is the most effective way to foster cross-cultural communication and translation as it builds on concepts already known to Bisu speakers. (For more on relevancy theory see Sperber and Wilson 1995).

##### **3.1.2 Terms Discovery, Research Design, Questions and Participants**

An initial worldview interview was conducted to gain overall understanding of the Bisu religious belief system and a list of terms that could be possible candidates for key terms for spiritual beings and other religious terminology in the New Testament.

The initial worldview questionnaire was based upon Harriet Hill's Worldview Research Questionnaire. This questionnaire was translated from English into Bisu with the help of a language assistant. The initial worldview questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

Data for this study was collected from mother-tongue speakers in the rural Bisu village of Doi Chompu located in Mae Lao district, Chiang Rai Province, Thailand. The village has a population of approximately 250 people.

Data for this study was collected from senior mother tongue speakers of the Bisu language community, including Leow (female), Un (male), Moon (male), Nang Gong (male), and Gap (female). It should be noted that Bisu people in this age group were not educated in the Thai government school system. In the past, Bisu children were not permitted to attend Thai public schools, though some Bisu men over the age of 30 were placed in the monkhood because their parents did not have the resources to raise them. The women in this demographic (50 plus) however, have never attended school of any kind and thus are largely unable to read or write in any language. Bisu men of this generation have had more exposure to a Theravada Buddhist worldview than the women of the same age group. However, both the men and women of this age group grew up during a time when the Bisu people living in Thailand had yet to adopt Theravada Buddhism. Many Bisu people in this age group grew up as monolingual speakers of the Bisu language. Only in adolescence did they acquire fluency in *Kammuang* or Northern Thai, spoken in Chiang Rai Province.

### 3.1.3 Unit of Analysis

The main goal of key translation terms discovery in this thesis was to obtain a set of religious terms in the Bisu language that, in some form, resemble the concepts behind the religious terms of the Greek language. Firstly, worldview interviews were conducted based on Harriet Hill's Worldview Questions. A componential analysis of all possible key translation terms was then conducted. A list of 10 possible terms was then compared to the source language. Definitions and componential features of source language terms relied primarily upon Louw and Nida's *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (1988) and Katherine Barnwell et al.'s "Key Biblical terms" (1995).

Barnwell's document assists by providing the following:

1. A description of the meaning of selected New Testament Greek terms, showing the essential parts (or components) of meaning of each one, and the ways in which the terms contrast or overlap with each other.

2. An explanation of areas of match and mismatch between the New Testament Greek terms and the terms that are commonly used to translate these terms in English.

#### **3.1.4 Research Variables and Instrument**

The dependent variables in this study were the degree of influence of Thai vocabulary borrowing and the influence of Thai Theravada Buddhism. The Bisu people have a strong desire to be accepted and seen as “civilized” Buddhists by their *Kammuang* (Northern Thai) speaking neighbors. At the same they desire to preserve their unique language and cultural traditions.

#### **3.1.5 Data Collection Setting, Procedure and Analysis**

All interviews were conducted in Doi Chompu village. All interviewees were told that the purpose of the interview was to collect Bisu religious words. Interviewees were told to try to use as much Bisu as possible and to only revert to Thai borrowings if there was no Bisu word available.

The first questionnaire contained 98 questions, in Bisu, pertaining to the Bisu worldview. The entire session was recorded with an Olympus digital recorder. A Bisu language assistant then transcribed the entire recorded session into Transcriba, a transcription software program from Apple. Meanings of any words not understood were then elicited from language assistants.

A summary of the worldview questionnaire was created, noting down any terms relating to the domains of Supernatural Beings and Powers and Religious Activities. Sixty-seven follow-up questions were created. A second interview was conducted with just one of the speakers from the first interview, a village elder, Ubong Un.

### **3.2 Methodology for Testing of Key Translation Terms**

This section discusses the test instrument used to evaluate key translation terms using a multiple-choice test. It consists of the following sections: design, research questions and participants, unit of analysis, variables and instrument, data collection procedures and analysis and reliability of research results. The research perspective of the section is same as the previous section. It is emphasized that the test proposed here is only a pilot test.

### **3.2.1 Research Perspective**

This thesis operates from the same perspective as Doty (2006). Assuming that this proposed method for testing key translation terms is effective, then the best scores should reflect the best understood terms.

### **3.2.2 Testing Design, Questions and Participants**

The multiple-choice test instrument was designed to test 10 key terms. A search was conducted of all the passages in which each term occurred in the Gospel of Mark and the book of Acts. These two books have already been translated into Bisu and passed the standard translation checking process required by SIL. It is assumed therefore, that the accuracy of translation in these passages should not pose a problem.

### **3.2.3 Unit of Analysis and Research Variables**

The test instrument for choosing key translation terms is evaluated according to the degree to which it meets its stated goals. Each question aims to 1) isolate the native speaker's comprehension of specific terms, 2) ascertain barriers to correct comprehension, and 3) determine whether suggested alternative terms may improve overall comprehension.

The degree to which participants actually understood the passages surrounding key translation terms was not evaluated.

### **3.2.4 Data Collection Setting, Procedure and Analysis**

Data from the first test set was collected from residents of Doi Chompu village, while data from the second test set was collected from residents of Doi Pui village. Doi Pui village is a predominantly Bisu speaking village of approximately 500 people also located in Chiang Rai province. Each village speaks a mutually intelligible variety of Bisu.

For each test, each subject listened to a passage and then answered a multiple-choice question concerning the meaning of a key term in that passage. Their answers, gender and age were noted. For the first test, each subject was interviewed individually so that participants would not be able to discuss their answers with each other. In the second test, multiple subjects were interviewed

at the same time, but each wrote down their answers on a piece of paper separately without discussing their answers with each other.

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